Claude Oscar Monet: Father of Impressionism

Claude Oscar Monet was a very talented artist who founded the French Impressionist Movement in painting. He was born to Claude-Adolphe Monet and Louise-Justine Aubree on November 14, 1840 in Paris, France.[[1]](#endnote-2)

From an early age, he had a definite love of art.[[2]](#endnote-3) In 1845, Monet’s family moved to Le Havre, France.[[3]](#endnote-4) In 1851, Monet started studying at the Le Havre school for the arts. His teacher was Jacques-Francois Ochard.[[4]](#endnote-5) Eugene Boudin introduced Monet to painting outside.[[5]](#endnote-6) In 1857, Monet went to live with his aunt, Marie-Jeanne Lecadre, after his mother’s death.[[6]](#endnote-7) In 1859, Monet went to work at the Académie Suisse in Paris.[[7]](#endnote-8) Monet joined the First Regiment of African Light Cavalry in Algeria in 1860, and fought until 1862. After his return, he went to study with Charles Gleyre where he met many famous artists including Pierre-Auguste Renoir. He shared his new technique ideas with the people he met. Monet also met Camille Doncieux and had a son with her in 1867. Monet attempted suicide in 1868 due to some financial difficulties. Doncieux and Monet got married in June, 1870 and moved to Argenteuil, France. Monet continued to study different artists and the styles they used. While at Argenteuil, Monet painted *Impression, Sunrise 1872*. This famous painting is responsible for the naming of the Impressionist Movement.[[8]](#endnote-9) While painting it, Monet realized it took quick painting and short brushstrokes to produce an Impressionistic painting.[[9]](#endnote-10) Doncieux birthed Monet’s second son before passing away on September 5, 1879 from Tuberculosis. Monet’s last tribute to her was a painting of Doncieux on her deathbed.[[10]](#endnote-11) In 1886, the first large-scale Impressionist group show was held in the United States. Monet married Alice Hoschedé in 1892. His gardens at his home in Giverny, France were a huge inspiration to many of his paintings, including Water Lilies. Hoschedé died in 1911. Monet was practically blind by the 1920s which hindered his ability to paint and to see colors accurately. Monet set to work on his large-scale painting of Water Lilies. His ability to complete it was affected not only by his eyesight, but also by the fact that he had never done mural art before. He continued to work on this painting until his death on December 5, 1926.[[11]](#endnote-12) He died because of lung cancer and was buried in the cemetery of the Giverny Church.[[12]](#endnote-13) While he lived, Monet created more than 2,500 works of art.[[13]](#endnote-14)

The style of Impressionism is achieved through unmixed primary colors and small brushstrokes. The French Impressionist Movement in painting was developed through the works of artists who shared techniques and styles. The founders of the Impressionist Movement were Claude Monet, Pierre Auguste Renoir, Camille Pissarro, Alfred Sisley, Berthe Morisot, Armand Guillaumin, and Frédéric Bazille. They worked together and influenced each other while creating a new style of painting. Monet was greatly influenced by Édouard Manet who, in turn began using Impressionistic styles in 1873. Impressionist artists were driven by the will to break free from traditional artistic styles. Impressionists worked to discover the influence of light changes on their subjects.[[14]](#endnote-15)

There are many different ways to tell what style a painting is. Impressionists painted asymmetrically. They didn’t want one side of the painting to directly mirror the other side, rather they tried to balance the painting with objects amounting to the same weight. For instance, an Impressionist painting would not have a tree on one side and a single cat on the other. The point is to balance the painting without placing the same thing on both sides.[[15]](#endnote-16)

Impressionist paintings contain a lot of color. Even the shadows contain color. In years prior to the Impressionist Movement, shadows were depicted with grays and other dark colors. However, Impressionists used colors in a darker shade to place a shadow on an object. Most shadows in the paintings are made with purples, blues, and greens.[[16]](#endnote-17)

Original artists used palates to mix their paints and achieve the perfect color before putting the color on the canvas. Impressionists used unmixed colors and put them directly onto the canvas.[[17]](#endnote-18)

Impressionist paintings were created by the use of short quick brushstrokes, instead of the normal long flowing lines. This style of painting is supposed to create a rough or unfinished look, and usually gives depth to the painting. Similarly, Impressionists used a thicker paint to add texture to the painting that resembles the original texture of the subject. The thick paint also captured the light in the subject and transferred it on to the canvas better than the commonly used paint which was thinner and ran easier.[[18]](#endnote-19)

Impressionist painters usually captured everyday life into paintings rather than exotic subjects. Many of the Impressionists got inspiration for their paintings from nature. Impressionism was one of the first styles that involved painting outdoors.[[19]](#endnote-20)

Perspective was also a big part of Impressionist paintings. The artists often painted the horizon line towards the top of the canvas and had the captivating subject from the middle to the bottom of the painting. This style makes the painting seem almost 3-D. When looking at one of these paintings, one could see the distance from one end of the subject to the other, almost as if it were real life.[[20]](#endnote-21)

A style that Monet used in his painting was to lightly paint the design on the canvas before going over it with bold lines and exhilarating detail. He used beige and white instead of the traditional reddish-brown to complete his underpainting.[[21]](#endnote-22)

Another style of Monet’s is adequately shown in *Impression, Sunrise.* He painted the landscape so it looked as he saw it when he painted it, and not how it actually looked. The images in the painting are all blurred together, which is the impression he got when he looked out at the sunrise.[[22]](#endnote-23)

Monet studied his subjects outdoors, in nature. He usually drew a rough sketch and formed the painting in his mind. He would then go indoors to his studio, and recreate the image in his mind. He was always able to capture light and color in his photos even though he was indoors because he had formed the image outdoors.[[23]](#endnote-24)

Eugene Boudin was the biggest influence on Impressionism. He was the one who taught artists the value of painting outside. This opened up new doors for painters. It allowed light and new textures to be expressed in the paintings. The beauty and natural light of the outdoors in Europe also influenced Impressionism. Monet’s painting was affected by the small amount of money he had. He moved to Argenteuil so he wouldn’t have to pay high rents. It was there that he found new subjects to paint. Argenteuil was the place Monet painted *Impression, Sunrise*, which was ideally responsible for the naming and creation of the Impressionist Movement.[[24]](#endnote-25)

Following the Impressionism period was the Post-Impressionism period. Famous artists such as Paul Gaughin and Vincent Van Gogh were painters in the Post-Impressionism period. The techniques of Impressionism are still used today by many artists. The most influential technique from the Impressionist period was the idea of painting outside. The Impressionist Movement made way for contemporary art because it moved away from the traditional styles. Also, Paris became the center of art for all of Europe because of this movement.

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